

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 857

SP 033 622

TITLE Family Life Education. A Parent's Guide. An Optional Health Education Unit.

INSTITUTION Manitoba Dept. of Education and Training, Winnipeg.

PUB DATE 90

NOTE 18p.; For other guides in this series, see SP 033 623-626.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Development; Curriculum Guides; *Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Life Education; Foreign Countries; Health Education; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; *Life Style; Parent Materials; Safety Education; Sexuality; Units of Study; Values

IDENTIFIERS Manitoba

ABSTRACT

Family Life Education is a unit which teaches facts and encourages the development of skills and attitudes that contribute to self-understanding, healthy interpersonal relationships, and successful family life. It promotes the development of physical, emotional, social, and intellectual well-being of young people. This brochure is designed to provide information for parents who may have questions about the Family Life Education Optional Unit, which is designed to be taught as part of the Manitoba Health Education curriculum, a required course of study from kindergarten to grade 9. The brochure informs parents about: the purpose of the program; the role of parents in the process of introducing the unit; and the contents of the Family Life Education Unit for grades 5, 7, and 9. (IAH)

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A Parents' Guide

1990

An Optional Health Education Unit

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INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever before, our children are learning about life from their friends and from media sources such as movies, television, magazines, and music. These sources of information often provide them with confusing images about the adult world and their place in it. Young people need help to put these images in perspective and to cope with their transition from childhood to maturity.

Young people look to their parents, teachers, religious leaders, and other respected members of their community to provide the help needed to develop into healthy and responsible adults.

To meet this need, these groups must work together to provide an education which fosters the development of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour necessary for adolescents to develop an appropriate and healthy lifestyle.

Manitoba Education and Training recognizes and believes in the importance of the family as the basic unit in society. By providing love, care, nurturing, and support the family meets the needs of its members. The family also bears the primary responsibility for educating children about family life from birth to maturity.

This brochure has been designed to answer some of the questions you may have as a parent interested in the Family Life Education Optional Unit of the Health Education curriculum. By reading this brochure you will learn:

- . the purpose of the program;
- . the role of parents in the process of introducing the Family Life Education Optional Unit within the Health Education curriculum; and
- . the contents of the curriculum taught in the Family Life Education Unit for grades 5, 7, and 9.

QUESTIONS PARENTS ASK ABOUT FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

What Is Family Life Education?

Family Life Education is a unit which teaches facts and encourages the development of skills and attitudes which contribute to self-understanding, healthy interpersonal relationships, and successful family life. It promotes the development of the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual well-being of young people.

The overall aim of the Family Life Education Optional Unit is to improve the quality of individual and family life. The unit has three main goals:

- . promoting the family as an important social unit;
- . encouraging the development of positive lifestyle practices that promote family living; and
- . encouraging responsible lifestyle practices that promote the positive development of an individual's sexual well-being.

The Family Life Education Optional Unit is designed to be taught as a part of the Health Education curriculum (1988), a required course of study from kindergarten to grade 9. The Health Education curriculum promotes healthy lifestyle practices through the study of the following units:

- . Social-Emotional Well-Being
- . Physical Well-Being
- . Nutrition
- . Dental Health
- . Safety
- . Environmental Health

In addition to these required units, school divisions are being given the opportunity to include the Family Life Education Optional Unit as part of their Health Education curriculum. A second optional unit, Drug Education, teaches positive lifestyle practices concerning hazardous products, chemical substances, and drugs.

How Was the Family Life Education Program Developed?

A committee of 18 people representing parents, health professionals, school administrators, and teachers of students in grades 5, 7, and 9 assisted in developing a made-in-Manitoba program designed to meet the needs of Manitoba children and youth. The unit has been written to ensure that the material presented is appropriate for the maturity level of students aged 10 to 15 years. The instructional unit encourages students to discuss the material covered in class with their parents at home. Sensitive issues are presented in ways which stress family and community values. The interim document has been revised and updated.

Who Will Teach Family Life Education in the Classroom?

Decisions about who provides instruction for family life education will be made within each school division. Trained, locally selected teachers or other professionals are necessary for appropriate instruction. Manitoba Education and Training will assist in developing in-service sessions and workshops to ensure that appropriate training is available for instructors.

Who Decides Whether My Child Will Attend?

If school divisions decide to offer family life education, they may implement it as a separate course or introduce the Family Life Education Optional Unit as a part of their Health Education curriculum. School divisions are

free to select lessons or adapt them to reflect the needs and values of their community. The grouping of students for instruction is a local decision.

Parents must be notified by the local school before a child begins receiving instruction in family life education. If you have any questions about the way family life education will be taught, you may contact the school for more information. Parents retain the right to withdraw their child from all, or any part of, family life instruction.

As a parent, you make the final decision concerning your child's participation in family life education.

May I Review the Curriculum Materials That Will Be Used?

Parents can review the curriculum that will be used in the classroom. Curriculum materials will be distributed to all school divisions. Parents can arrange to review this material by contacting their school division. Copies of the curriculum guide may be purchased from the Manitoba Textbook Bureau, 277 Hutchings Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 2R4.

Each grade level has a teacher's guide which includes lesson plans, teaching supports, background notes for teachers, and information about references, audio-visual resources, and print materials. There are 16 lessons in grade 5, 14 in grade 7, and 19 in grade 9.

Manitoba Education and Training encourages parents to take the time to become familiar with the Family Life Education Unit. Informed parents can play a more active role in the discussion of family life topics with their children, helping them to understand the issues which they must face and the important choices that they must make as they mature.

What Values Are Taught in the Family Life Education Unit?

There are "right" and "wrong" values depending on an individual's and a society's religious beliefs, personal beliefs, and cultural mores. The commonly accepted values listed below are widely held in Manitoba.

1. Dignity--showing respect for elders, parents, children, and self.
2. Honesty--being truthful with others and self.
3. Equality--having the same rights, regardless of religion, race, or sex.
4. Responsibility--carrying out one's obligations or duties; answering for one's own actions.
5. Justice--being fair to all people and not exploiting others.
6. Empathy--showing care and understanding for others and their cultures.
7. Consideration--demonstrating love and generosity towards others.
8. Commitment--showing loyalty to family, country, ideals, and beliefs.
9. Self-control--being able to examine and manage one's activities.

Such commonly accepted values, or core moral precepts, transcend cultural and religious differences. Commonly accepted values are supported by the mandate of the school system which states:

While it is impossible to identify a particular position on a given set of values that should be conveyed to all, many qualities of mind and character are clearly seen as desirable and should be developed, e.g., honesty, respect and concern for others, empathy and tolerance, cooperativeness, resourcefulness, self-reliance, open-mindedness, concern for societal issues and an open attitude towards social change, respect for legitimately constituted authority, capacity for hard work, willingness to become involved in a genuine search for solutions to problems.*

Thus, values in health education should focus on a sense of caring and respect for family and others, kindness, honesty, compassion, and respect for self.

* Manitoba Department of Education. Administrative Handbook. Winnipeg: The Department, 1988. Section 1, p. 8.

WHAT IS TAUGHT TO GRADE 5 STUDENTS?

This information is provided to give parents an overview of the actual lesson content of the grade 5 section of the Family Life Education Optional Unit. There are 16 lessons in grade 5. The content of each lesson is considered to be appropriate for grade 5 students. The lesson overviews are numbered to correspond to the lesson numbers printed in the curriculum guide.

The Importance of Families 5.1

Family Structures: Family Collage or Family Puzzle

5.1.1

Students discuss the various types of families and participate in activities depicting a variety of family structures. The family is presented as a committed group of people that lives together in a home and provides love, care, nurturing, and support for its members.

Family Functions 5.1.2

All persons have basic physical and psychological needs. The ways in which families function to meet these needs are studied.

Human Growth and Development 5.2

Body Changes: Physical Growth 5.2.1

Children of the same age follow similar growth patterns, although every child grows at his or her own rate. Students discuss physical growth.

Major Body Organs 5.2.2

The human body is made up of many related organs that work together to assist the body to do its work. Basic information is provided about the role and importance of major body organs including the male and female reproductive organs.

Male Reproductive System 5.2.3

The physical, emotional, and social changes that boys undergo at puberty are introduced. This lesson may be taught to boys and girls separately, or in mixed groups.

Female Reproductive System 5.2.4

The physical, emotional, and social changes that girls undergo at puberty are introduced. This lesson may be taught to girls and boys separately, or in mixed groups.

The Menstrual Cycle 5.2.5

Menstruation is presented as a regularly occurring process which begins at puberty. Responsibilities which accompany the onset of menstruation include learning new personal hygiene practices, taking proper rest and exercise, and bathing regularly. This lesson may be taught to girls and boys separately, or in mixed groups.

Reproduction: How New Life Is Formed 5.2.6

The development of a new life is an important event in family living. This lesson provides information on reproduction within the family context. This lesson may be taught to boys and girls separately, or in mixed groups.

Relationships and Responsibilities 5.3

Caring for New Family Members 5.3.1

The addition of a new family member brings new responsibilities to everyone in the family. The family teaches love, care, nurturing, and support among its members. Basic values such as respect, kindness, honesty, and justice are emphasized.

Family Responsibilities 5.3.2

Family members have important responsibilities. Students review case studies showing families in daily living situations which illustrate the importance of values such as caring, sharing, and taking care of family property.

Family Communications: The Family Meeting 5.3.3

A family may enhance communication among its members by holding regular family meetings. The principles involved in holding effective family meetings are demonstrated for students to consider. This is an optional lesson.

Family Change 5.3.4

Family structures can, and often do, change. These changes affect family members in different ways. Students discuss case studies illustrating how families adjust to change.

Personal Safety 5.4

Safety and Strangers 5.4.1

Safety rules are introduced to provide students with skills to prevent injury or assault.

Family and Community Support Systems 5.4.2

Students review case studies of abusive situations and discuss ways to take responsible preventive actions for personal safety. They are encouraged to identify key support persons from their family, friends, and community.

Sexual Assault Prevention 5.4.3

Sexual assault is against the law. Children must learn to recognize abusive situations and to practice responsible health behaviour that promotes personal safety.

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 5.5

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 5.5.1

Students are encouraged to set health goals and practice positive health behaviour at home, at school, and in the community.

WHAT IS TAUGHT TO GRADE 7 STUDENTS?

This information is provided to give parents an overview of the actual lesson content of the grade 7 section of the Family Life Education Optional Unit. There are 14 lessons in grade 7. The content of each lesson is considered to be appropriate for grade 7 students. The lesson overviews are numbered to correspond to the lesson numbers printed in the curriculum guide.

The Importance of Families 7.1

Family Structures: Definition of a Family 7.1.1

Students discuss different types of family grouping, and develop a definition of "family." The family is presented as a committed group of people that lives together in a home and provides love, care, nurturing, and support for its members.

Family Functions 7.1.2

Students review the functions of a family in providing care, nurturing, and support, and discuss the importance of assuming increasing responsibility within their own families.

Human Growth and Development 7.2

The Endocrine System 7.2.1

The endocrine system regulates and controls body changes at puberty. This lesson provides background for lessons on puberty, reproduction, and sound hygiene practices.

Puberty: Male and Female Reproductive Systems 7.2.2

Students learn that the beginning of puberty is marked by secondary growth changes, and that boys and girls vary in their rates of growth and development. This lesson may be taught to boys and girls separately, or in mixed groups.

The Menstrual Cycle 7.2.3

The process of menstruation is described in more detail here than in the comparable grade 5 lesson. Personal care to promote female health and to prevent disease is discussed. This lesson may be taught to girls and boys separately, or in mixed groups.

Reproduction and Fetal Development 7.2.4

The biological processes involved in the development of new human life are presented. The determination of gender and development of twins are examined.

Personal Hygiene 7.2.5

Students prepare inexpensive hygiene products, such as shampoo, skin cleansers, and toothpaste, that promote personal cleanliness.

Relationships and Responsibilities 7.3

Caring for Family Members 7.3.1

Characteristics of the newborn are discussed. Family members are encouraged to share the responsibility for meeting the needs of the newborn.

Family Responsibilities 7.3.2

Families vary in how they manage responsibilities and tasks in the home. Case studies are presented illustrating different ways that families manage their responsibilities.

Family Communications: The Family Meeting 7.3.3

A family may enhance communication among its members by holding regular family meetings. The principles involved in holding effective family meetings are demonstrated for students to consider. This is an optional lesson.

Dating: Kids' and Parents' Views 7.3.4

Dating is an important step in the development of adolescents. Schools, communities, and families provide opportunities for teens to meet. It is a responsibility of students to respect their families' views on dating.

Dating: Concerns and Responsibilities 7.3.5

Students analyze common dating problems and alternatives. Students are encouraged to choose responsible behaviour based on the values of their families and society.

Personal Safety 7.4

Sexual Assault Prevention 7.4.1

Case studies of common types of sexual assault of youth are analyzed. Students are encouraged to use support systems and practice behaviour that promotes personal safety.

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 7.5

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 7.5.1

Students identify health-enhancing behaviour and plan a project to promote personal health.

WHAT IS TAUGHT TO GRADE 9 STUDENTS?

This information is provided to give parents an overview of the actual lesson content of the grade 9 section of the Family Life Education Optional Unit. There are 19 lessons in grade 9. The content of each lesson is deemed to be appropriate for grade 9 students. The lesson overviews are numbered to correspond to the lesson numbers printed in the curriculum guide.

The Importance of Families 9.1

Family Life Stages 9.1.1

While each family is unique, there are a number of life stages through which a family may progress. Students are introduced to the concept of family stages.

Family Life Stages: Marriage 9.1.2

The family is the basic unit of society. Marriage, based on shared love, is the beginning of a developmental life stage for families.

Family Life Stages: The Aging Stage 9.1.3

Aging as a family life stage is discussed. Positive health, outside interests, and family and community relationships influence adjustments to this stage.

Human Growth and Development 9.2

Puberty and Adolescence 9.2.1

Adolescence is a stage marked by changes in growth and development influenced by hormones. Students describe the physical, social, and emotional changes occurring at puberty and during adolescence.

Male and Female Reproductive Systems 9.2.2

Students review the male and female reproductive systems which mature at adolescence.

The Menstrual Cycle 9.2.3

The processes of menstruation and the appropriate use of hygiene products are explained. This information promotes personal responsibility for health and well-being.

Human Reproduction and the Beginning of Life 9.2.4

This lesson provides information on reproduction. The beginnings of life and stages of fetal development are reviewed. The implications of sexual maturation are discussed.

Dilemmas and Issues 9.3

Adolescence: Turbulent or Carefree Years? 9.3.1

Parents, teachers, and adolescents may not recognize that adolescence is a turbulent time. Students examine life events that cause stress during adolescence.

Dating Relationships 9.3.2

Students learn to recognize the stages of dating and discuss how dating can be a special way to develop a relationship. The responsibilities of young people who are dating are reviewed in relation to parental responsibilities.

Sex-Role Stereotyping 9.3.3

Males and females have abilities for a variety of careers and jobs. It is of equal importance for males and females to pursue career pathways of interest to them regardless of gender.

Making Responsible Sexual Decisions: Abstinence 9.3.4

Today, many young people are confused about sexual behavioural standards because of the mixed messages in their environment. This lesson emphasizes the value that

young people should not become sexually involved. They are encouraged to refer to their families' values or to commonly accepted values. Adolescents need support from their families and their community not only to set a standard but also to abide by it.

Solving Problems Assertively 9.3.5

Societal pressures and steady dating may contribute to early sexual involvement. Assertiveness skills, knowledge of support systems, and Canadian law provide students with a basis for making wise decisions.

Teenage Pregnancy:

Risks, Consequences, and Prevention 9.3.6

This lesson emphasizes the value that adolescents should not be sexually involved. Students examine the risks and consequences of teenage pregnancy to the health of the mother and child. Information on pregnancy prevention, including abstinence, is provided so that students may make healthful decisions about their sexuality.

Pregnancy and Drugs 9.3.7

This lesson examines the common drugs, alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine, and the complications that their use may cause during pregnancy.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases 9.3.8

The characteristics, risks, and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases are explained. Community resources for the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases are identified. Personal responsibility is emphasized for practicing prevention.

Sexual Assault Prevention 9.3.9

Sexual assault is against the law. It includes a wide variety of sexual offences. Practicing personal safety and using support systems will provide adolescents with skills to promote personal safety.

Family Change: Divorce 9.3.10

Separation and divorce are family crises that affect all members of a family. Students are encouraged to examine ways to support a person experiencing this family change.

Family Problems 9.3.11

Students are encouraged to identify support systems that provide assistance to families.

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 9.4

Promoting Positive Lifestyle Practices 9.4.1

Students identify health-enhancing behaviour and plan a project to promote responsibility for healthful living.